DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 172 093 CG 013 535

AUTHOR	Boer, William J.
TITLE	Long Range Planning: An Institutional Priority.
PUB DATE	[78]
NOTE	9p.
JOURNAL CIT	Journal of the Indiana University Student Personnel Association; Spr 1979
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Budgeting; *Colleges; Declining Enrollment; Facility Planning; Higher Education; *Institutional Administration; *Planning; *Student Personnel Services; *Universities

ABSTRACT

Long-range planning is a tool by which a college or university can determine directions for the future. In light of anticipated budgetary and enrollment declines, it becomes increasingly important for the entire institutional community to determine where it is, where it wants to be in the future, and what steps it will take to reach its goals. Long-range planning can facilitate this process by organizing and communicating these future directions. The framework components of long-range planning--mission statement, objectives, programs, organization, personnel resources, facilities resources, and financial resources--must be constantly evaluated and updated as indicated by feedback. The student personnel function is a key to the survival of a college or university since the recruitment, admission, and retention of students will determine to a large extent the future of the institution. Consequently it is necessary for the student affairs division of an institution to continue to examine itself to determine if it is effective in supporting the institutional mission. Consensus directions must become part of the long-range planning process. (Author)

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LONG RANGE PLANNING: AN INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITY

William J. Boer

The author provides an overview of the importance, components, processes, and limitations of long range planning and applies these concepts to the role of student personnel work in institutions of higher education.

The current state of declining enrollments and concomitant budget crunches have caused dire concern in colleges and universities throughout the United States. Assuming continuation of current financial and enrollment trends, colleges and universities will face even greater challenges in the coming decade (Bowen, 1978). It has therefore become a necessity for institutions to undergo extensive internal analysis and research in order to assess their present situation and to be able to identify and plan for future developments. The student affairs division in particular must identify its future directions in order to meet the needs of tomorrow's students. This task can be enhanced by comprehensive long range planning.

What Is a Long Range Plan?

Long range planning is not a new process, for it has been integral, formally or informally, to most college and university decision-making throughout history. However, the concept has gained considerable attention as a result of the following facts. A recent HEW report predicted a 19% drop in college aged students by 1990. At the same time the fertility rate has dropped steadily from a high of 120 births per 1,000 women in 1955 to 80 births per 1,000 women in 1972 (Abramowitz, 1978). This anticipated decline in college aged population has darkened the enrollment picture at many institutions. Indiana University—Bloomington, for example, anticipates a decline in total students from the present 30,000 to 25,000 in 1989 (*Master Plan,* 1976). Smaller institutions may face greater peril. Calvin

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College, a church related liberal arts school in Michigan, will attempt to draw more students from the Michigan college-aged population that will decrease by 50,000 and a college aged church constituency that will decrease by 43% (*A Margin of Christian Excellence,* 1978). There is indeed a need for well-conceived plans to cope with the situation indicated by these statistics.

The long range master plan for development is an instrument designed for and produced by the entire institutional community. A long range plan is a "comprehensive planning process that links everyday academic and administrative activity with the guiding purposes of the institution" (Porekh, 1978, p. 5). According to Porekh (1978), this planning process provides a "common understanding of what the institution is, where it stands, and what it wants to be" (p. 6).

Typical long range plans are set up for five to ten years into the future of the institution. Plans are normally written, published documents which are assembled by the chief campus office, usually the President's office, with (ideally) the contribution of all members of the community. The planning process must be communicated and shared by as many faculty, staff, and students as possible in order for the plan to be effective. Porekh (1978) states that the planning process will succeed ". . . only if the process of planning itself has the same meaning for the English Department as it has for the Admission's Office [and] . . . if it carries the same validity for the President's Office as for the Division of Arts and Sciences" (p. 8). Likewise, as the student affairs division formulates future planning it must constantly attempt to share and integrate its plans and goals with other academic and administrative units of the institution.

In reality the guidelines of the long range plan are a product of the concentrated efforts of a college or university president and the presidential cabinet. The major decisions are often made at this level after gathering as much input as possible from the institutional community. It is for this reason that Spoelof (1978) insists that the president be sold on long range planning before the master plan is developed. Without presidential support and encouragement the planning effort will more than likely fail.

Components of a Long Range Plan

Many planners (Priest, 1975; Porekh, 1978; Spoelof, 1978) have suggested that long range plans include the following framework components:

1. Comprehensive Mission Statement
2. Objectives
3. Programs
4. Organization

5. Personnel Resources
6. Facilities Resources
7. Financial Resources

The mission statement of a college or university must define the community to be served and describe the campus mission, usually in terms of a distribution of scholarship, research, and public service. The institution must extensively project future trends with its mission statement. The role of student personnel work within the mission and purpose of the institution is to recruit, admit, and retain students (Priest, 1977). This role is certainly one of the most essential to the survival of the institution, for students are the lifeblood of higher education.

Specific objectives set definite priorities in order to fulfill the institutional mission. Long range planning, like other management tools, requires the establishment of explicit success criteria for measuring mission achievement. For example, an objective by the student affairs division to retain a higher percentage of sophomore students could be measured by comparing previous enrollment figures with current ones. These objectives are translated into programs. The institution plans for future activities, events, and processes for accomplishing its objectives. Academic, student affairs, administrative, and service units are all analyzed in terms of program contribution to the mission and purpose of the institution. In the above example a program in the residence halls specifically designed for sophomore students may help to increase sophomore retention.

Decisions involving organizational and structural relationships necessary to effectively deliver these programs are also components of the long range plan. Determination of where organizational decisions should be made and who should make them are vital to the future success of the institution. The necessary personnel resources required to implement the organizational structure should also be included in the long range plan. Priest (1975) places heavy emphasis upon a proper blend of quantity and quality of faculty, administration, staff, trustees, and students. It is his contention that certain academic departments, and to some extent administrative posts, must seek higher quality personnel in order to continue to contribute to the institutional mission.

Facility resources including quantity and types of support needed for implementation of program's and organizational relationships are an important part of the plan. Forecasts for new buildings, facility modifications, and property acquisitions must be based on standards related to personnel and programs needs. Handicapped services, which generally are the responsibility of the student affairs division, will be expanded as a result of greater demand and federal legislation required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Facility modifications as well

as plans for new buildings should be accessible to the handicapped and should be documented in the long range plan.

The facilities, personnel, and programs designed to meet the objectives and mission of the institution included in the long range plan require adequate funds in order to be accomplished. Therefore, financial resources must also be carefully critiqued, analyzed, and forecasted. The institution should assess its sources of income (i.e. tuition, state appropriations, endowments, grants, and gifts) and should project its future income and expenditures. There is a reciprocal relationship between sufficient funding and the other elements of the long range plan. For example, the income which a college receives from tuition payments is directly related to the number of students enrolled. Enrollment is a result of recruitment programs, admission policies, relationships with college academic and administrative personnel, satisfaction with college facilities, and many of the other long range elements.

Consequently it is essential for the long range plan to be as comprehensive as possible. When planning in each of the above component areas, the institution's coordinator of long range planning should insure that each facet of the plan is given equal consideration in its respective area, i.e., facility resources should be forecasted by representatives of campus planning and physical plant whereas at the same time equal effort should be devoted by a representative group of campus and constituent leaders to sharpen and direct the mission statement of the institution.

The Cyclical Planning Process

The entire long range plan should be updated periodically in the light of feedback. For after the plan is implemented it should be evaluated whereupon deletions, alterations, and additions should be made in order to revise the plan. This process can be thought of as a cycle of plan development, plan implementation, and plan evaluation. Many institutions develop, implement, and evaluate their long range plans on an annual basis (Priest, 1975).

The result of the cyclical planning process is the publication or announcement of the long range master plan for development. A long range plan can take varying forms and strategies. The Long Range Planning Office at Indiana University was instituted in 1974. Indiana publishes biennial long range plans for each of its eight regional campuses. The plans themselves are divided into thirteen sections which include functional forecasts in such areas as enrollment projections, cooperative arrangements, operating fund requirements, and instructional program development. The long range plans of Indiana University are written for ten year periods. For example the 1976 Indiana University Bloomington campus plan was written for 1976-1986. Every two years then, the Bloomington plan is completely

revised by representatives from the University community (*Master Plan*, 1976).

In contrast to Indiana, Calvin College publishes a five year plan and revises the plan on an annual basis. Calvin does not include a statement of mission and purpose in the plan itself but relies on an established philosophical statement for guidelines. Calvin's long range plan concentrates on four determinants of the state of the college: (1) Academic Affairs including administrative organization, academic personnel, academic programs, academic facilities, the library, and scholarship programs; (2) College Advancement including enrollments, admissions, financial aid, college and alumni relations, and financial development; (3) Student Affairs including student activities, services organizations and structure; and (4) Business and Finance including financial status, physical plant, and personnel. Calvin also has just recently begun its formal long range planning efforts (1976), and views long range planning as a tool by which decisions about the future may be made (*A Margin of Christian Excellence*, 1978). It is apparent that the concept and utilization of long range planning can take many different forms and may undergo varying cyclical revisions.

Limitations of Long Range Planning

When analyzing the long range planning concept it is also necessary to understand what the reaction of the institutional community is to planning. Astin and Christian (1977) surveyed administrators at 22 liberal arts colleges of various enrollment sizes, admissions standards, and religious affiliations to determine what the administrators knew about their institutions. The premise underlying the project was that most planning systems assume adequate knowledge of institutional data such as enrollment, academic ability of students, and faculty size. The project revealed that most administrators in the colleges surveyed did not have a sufficient grasp of basic institutional data upon which long range planning decisions are made. Astin and Christian (1977) found college presidents to be off by an average of 9% error in estimation of freshman enrollment and 9% off in their estimates of faculty full time equivalents. Chief fiscal officers showed a 7% mean error in estimating freshman class size—a source of inaccuracy in planning when predicting tuition income. Directors of development were found to be the least accurate group in knowledge of these basic data. They showed a 29% error in knowledge of bachelor degree production, and an 11% error in current first time student enrollment.

Astin and Christian (1977) raise an important issue in long range planning. In order to insure accuracy in the planning process the entire planning team—administrators, faculty, staff, trustees, and students—must be informed of an agreed upon data base. This may well be one of the major

faults in long range planning. Schools may delve into planning prematurely without providing the basic knowledge with which to make informed decisions. It may well be the task of the student affairs division to communicate this basic knowledge to all members of the institutional community. In order to effectively recruit, admit, and retain students the institutions should maintain consistent policies, procedures and information for its students.

Another major criticism of long range planning is introduced in an article by Shuck (1977). Shuck believes that American colleges and universities have turned to long range planning as the savior of the institution. The planning panacea according to Shuck (1977) is based on the ". . . ultimate American faith in the efficacy of process and management, which is of course the Ur-religion of planning itself" (p. 594). Shuck's position holds that long range planning in itself will never be the answer to the current funding and enrollment woes of colleges and universities. For long range planning, like the computer, should be used as a tool for institutional decision making and not as the absolute guideline or "Bible" for the college or university to adhere to strictly. Indeed, planning guidelines and technical innovations must ". . . coincide with natural systems" (p. 600). Everything does not have a technical solution. Shuck does not condemn planning, but he encourages planners to "tease the wisdom out of ourselves. Assess the effects of its [planning's] well intentioned interventions upon the existing natural ecosystems" (Shuck, p. 601). These two criticisms of long range planning should be considered in every phase of the planning process.

Student Personnel and Long Range Planning

Student personnel work is a key to the success not only of long range planning but also of the future of higher education itself. For student personnel involves relations with the very core of the institution: the student. In the era of declining enrollments it becomes increasingly important for institutions to broaden the scope and intensity of their recruiting efforts. Marketing strategies, identification of new student groups, and special appeals to constituents all are recent efforts of student personnel workers to bring more students into college and university doors.

Admission, scholarship, and financial aid strategies must also be critiqued and shifted to meet the demands of the day. Student personnel workers must encourage this analysis of admission standards and financial aid packages by actively participating in the long range planning process. For example, the admission's standards of a college are directly tied to the college's mission. If the students personnel worker has found that admission of a special student group would increase enrollment and add to academic quality, this finding should be submitted to the long range planning officer in order to include the special student group into the mission statement.

The student personnel worker continually supports the mission of the institution by striving to retain students through traditional functions in the student personnel profession. Jones (1978) suggests that a shift of emphasis in the traditional functions may be necessary in the future. Of the four general categories developed by the NASPA Division of Professional Development and Standards Committee (Ruthenberg, 1971), Jones cites the profession as moving away from the "control functions" of recruitment, admissions, student discipline and housing. The "caring functions" of counseling services, health services, placement, and financial aid, and the "co-curricular functions" of student political organizations and social and cultural programs will continue to be important. However, the "educational and developmental functions" of remedial services, educational programs in residence halls, orientation of new students and other functions previously considered to be of an academic nature will receive an increased emphasis in the future. Jones' contention complements the Student Development Model (Miller and Prince, 1977), encouraging the student personnel worker to meet the developmental and educational needs of the total student. It is essential for the student personnel profession to continue to integrate its contemporary and future directions into the long range planning process in order to successfully implement plans into action.

Summary

Long range planning is a tool by which a college or university can determine directions for the future. In light of anticipated budgetary and enrollment declines, it becomes increasingly important for the entire institutional community to determine what it is, where it wants to be in the future, and what steps it will take to reach its goals. Long range planning can facilitate this process by organizing and communicating these future directions. The framework components of long range planning, mission statement, objectives, programs, organization, personnel resources, facilities resources, and financial resources must be constantly evaluated and updated as determined by feedback.

The student personnel function is a key to the survival of a college or university since the recruitment, admission, and retention of students will determine to a large extent the future of the institution. Consequently it is necessary for the student affairs division of an institution to continue to examine itself to determine if it is effective in supporting the institutional mission. Consensus directions must become part of the long range planning process.

Finally, it is important to note that the success of long range planning depends vitally upon the realization that planning is only a tool for decision making and by no means a panacea. The future of student personnel and higher education is dependent upon many economic, cultural, and national

developments. Planning can be utilized by the institutions to anticipate these developments and formulate directions for the future.

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